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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

1756 Quali

Quality guides in buying ready-made dresses

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A radio talk by Hiss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Boonomics, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 association MBC stations, Tuesday, September 18, 1936

MR: SALISBURY: Well, Miss Van Deman, what's the headliner on your House-hold Calendar today:

MISS VAN DEMAN: Fall clothes. Ready-made dresses, to be exact. Our textile people have just published a new leaflet called "Quality guides in buying ready-made dresses."

MR. SALISBURY: More of that consumer education material? That's fine.

I'm strong for that. But I wish you'd tell your textile people not to overlook men's clothes. We're also in need of a few guides on quality.

MISS VAN DEMAN: All right. I'll pass the word along. A while back you know you asked about quality in men's shirts. Well I took that as a royal command. We've collected a lot of very interesting facts about buying men's shirts. I'm ready to be interviewed any time.

MR. SALISBURY: Well of course there's no time like the present, but I'll be chivalrous. Women and children first. You go ahead and talk about dresses today. And perhaps next week we can have the interview on men's shirts if that's all right with you.

WISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, that suits me fine. I'm sure I don't know when is the busiest shopping season on men's shirts. But I do know that every time I've been in a store lately to look at dresses I've found a crowd of other women there ahead of me. And finally when I got waited on I found it harder than ever to tell even what kinds of fabrics dresses are made of this year.

Why, oh why, can't ready-made dresses be labeled so that we know what fabrics they are made of? That doesn't seem much to ask of the manufacturers, and it certainly would save a lot of argument and dissatisfaction. For instance, I tried on one dress of very pretty dark green material. It was different from anything I'd seen before. So I asked the clerk what it was. "Oh silk," she said, "all pure silk." She had to say something quick, of course, so she said what she thought would impress me most.

Well, I couldn't take out a match and apply the burning test to the material of that dress right then and there. But I looked at it hard and I felt it. If it was silk, it was certainly very different from all the silks I've known before. I don't think there was a thread of silk in it. I think it was one of the new synthetic fibers. Now, if that dress had carried a label saying "All pure rayon", I should have looked at it with respect. I'm very much interested in these new rayons. But I do want to know when I'm buying a dress of rayon and when I'm buying one of silk or wool. Also I want to know whether the silk is pure-dye silk or weighted. I find that pure-dye silk lasts me longer, and I haven't much time to spend shopping around for dresses and having them altered and all that. And when I buy a

wool dress I want to know whether its all wool, that is, wool from a sheep's back, not rabbit hair or some other exotic kind of a fiber. And I'm not in the least prejudiced against part-wool and part-cotton fabrics. For some kinds of dresses they are admirable. I'm just one of these conscientious, literal-minded consumers who wants to know what she's buying when she buys a dress.

Then another thing, I find it pays me to buy dresses that are well cut and well sewed. What if a clerk does raise an eyebrow when I turn a dress wrong side out and look at the seams? It's nothing to her if the seams fray out and I have to discard that dress in a little while. Of course if I take it back and complain, she may be called in, but the buyer is the one who will have to try to pacify me, and I'll finally land at that place called the adjustment desk. So I've found it's better to buy good quality dresses in the first place with wide seams and deep hems and fullness where fullness is needed. Of course, I don't want to add any more pounds to my figure, perish the thought, but I confess that I have found these let-out and let-down allowances very useful. Sometimes they've saved me the price of a new dress.

In the last few years there's been a great deal of skimp cutting in ready-made dresses. Some manufacturers in order to beat their competitors have skimped and turned and twisted their goods so as to get the greatest number of dresses from the smallest number of yards. They've made skirts running crosswise instead of lengthwise of the goods, and sleeves on the bias, and collars every which way, Unless you look sharp and sit down as well as stand up in your dress as it's being fitted, you may not notice some of these freaks in cutting. Of course, if you really want them, there are plenty of good quality garments to be had, cut the right way of the goods, and that hang right and feel right when you put them on.

Clarice Scott, who has written this new leaflet on buying dresses, has taught me even to look at the stitching. The length of the stitich and the kind of thread used are marks of quality. And so are the other details like bars at pocket corners, bindings, facings, plackets, and armhole finishes. There's a lot more to buying a dress besides the color and the style and the price. They must be right, of course, but they don't count for much unless you have quality also.

If you haven't already bought all your fall dresses and want some good common-sense talk on buying ready-made clothes, write to me. I'll be glad to send you Miss Scott's new leaflet.

And goodbye until next time'.